

# THE HIGH VALUE OF THE KINGDOM

*The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid; and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he had, and buys that field.*

*Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls, <sup>46</sup> and upon finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had, and bought it." Matthew 13:44-46).*

"Daddy, tell me a story!" How many times have I heard those words? I do not think we ever outgrow the fascination for hearing stories. There is something fascinating that takes place when a story is told and your imagination is engaged that transports the listener to another time and place.

Jesus was a master of the art of storytelling. Some of His stories were long and involved. Others, like the two which we will examine today, are short and to the point. We call them PARABLES.

## THE PARABLE OF THE HIDDEN TREASURE

*The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid; and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he had, and buys that field." (Matthew 13:44).*

Once upon a time there was a man. He happened to be going through a field and he came across a treasure that had been hidden there. He was not looking for it. Indeed, finding a treasure seems to have been the furthest thing from his mind. Perhaps he is whistling an old Jewish tune as he is out for his morning walk and suddenly he stubs his toe. "Ouch!" As he is rubbing his injured toe, he looks down and sees something shining out through a clump of grass. He pauses to investigate and finds that it is a wondrous treasure.

God is a God of surprises. He often brings things into our lives which we are not expecting and which, if the truth be known, we don't even want.

I hate surprises. I have often wished that the Lord would give me an itinerary of everything that is going to happen for the next 40 years. But He does not work that way. And His interruptions are always for my best. When I stub my toe on His interruption, I need to be still and look. It just may be His hidden treasure that I have stumbled upon.

## 1. The Practice.

The idea of hiding a treasure in a field is a little foreign to us. We are used to hiding our treasures in banks. But there were no banks for common people in that day. If you wanted to protect your valuables, then it was necessary to hide them. This was especially true in Palestine, a land that had been conquered by the Romans. If a man did not want his valuables to be confiscated by the Roman government or by a greedy and crooked tax-collector, then his only option would be to hide those valuables.

You will remember that in the parable of the talents, one of the servants followed this practice and took his talent and buried it in the ground.

In 1948 an Arab shepherd boy threw a rock into a cave located in the wilderness near the Dead Sea and heard the crash of a breaking pot. When he entered the cave to investigate, he found pots containing old scrolls. The Dead Sea scrolls are the oldest copies of the Scriptures that we have today. They are a priceless treasure.

## 2. The Picture.

This man came across a treasure that had been hidden in this field. There was a problem. The treasure was not his and the field was not his. We do not know to whom the treasure belonged. It apparently did NOT belong to the owner of the field, or else he would have dug it up before selling the field. Perhaps it had been hidden long ago and the original owner was long since dead.

This man has just found an unclaimed treasure. What shall he do? His conscience will not allow him to steal it. He does not have the ready cash in hand to buy the field. And so, he goes out and sells everything that he owns, holding nothing back.

He sells his house, his wagon, his clothes, his farm animals. He has the biggest garage sale that anyone in the neighborhood has ever seen. Everything goes. And then, he goes immediately and buys the field, perhaps for much more money than it would normally be worth.

## 3. The Point of the Parable.

Here is the point of the parable. The cost of the land is of no concern to the man because it will be more than compensated by the value of the treasure.

The Kingdom is like that. It is the most valuable thing on earth. There is nothing

that should be more important to you than obtaining it for yourself.

## THE PARABLE OF THE PEARL

*Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls,  
45 and upon finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he  
had, and bought it. (Matthew 13:45-46).*

Now we have a new story. This time, instead of a random discovery, we see a merchant who is deliberately looking for pearls.

### 1. The Practice.

Pearls were the most valued gem of that day. The Talmud said that pearls were beyond price. Among some cultures, the pearl was even worshipped. The best pearls were those which were shipped from as far away as India.

### 2. The Picture.

This is the picture of a merchant. His job is buying and selling commodities. But there is one commodity which has captured his attention to the exclusion of all others. He deal in fine pearls. His life is devoted to seeking the small gems. One day, he comes across the best pearl that he has ever seen. It overshadows all other. He determines that he must have this pearl.

What does he do? He sells all that he has. He sells every other pearl in his inventory. All other treasures are laid aside for the purpose of obtaining this one most valued prize.

### 3. The Point of the Parable.

The point of this parable is the same as that of the first parable. It is that value determines commitment. You will be committed to that which you value.

What do you value? To what end are you dedicating your life? It could be a great many things:

- a. Pleasure.
- b. Family.
- c. Money.

- d. Power and prestige.
- e. A certain type of lifestyle.

If it is anything less than the Kingdom of Heaven, then you have missed the boat.

The book of Ecclesiastes is a journal of a man who had it all. His name was Solomon. He was the richest man who ever lived. He had it all and he did it all. He had women by the hundreds. He sampled every type of entertainment. He was the most powerful king of his day. And in the end, it was all empty.

It is like the story of the man who found a chest filled with money. But as he examined it, he learned that it was made up solely of worthless Confederate bills. He had a fortune, but it was worthless.

It makes me wonder how many of us are building worthless fortunes today. What do you consider to be of value? What cost do you place on the kingdom?

## **PRINCIPLES FROM THE PARABLES**

Now I want to suggest several principles which we can draw from these two parables.

1. The Kingdom is Priceless.

Both of these parables teach us of the exalted value of the Kingdom. Everything else will one day pass away. Everything that you own is destined to end up in a garbage heap. The tragedy would be to spend your life for that which fades away, only to have lost your own soul.

2. The Kingdom is not Superficially Visible.

Both the treasure of the first parable and the pearl of the second parable were hidden. They were not immediately visible to everyone.

Now, the circumstances of the finder in each parable were different. In the first parable, the man was not out looking for buried treasure. He seems to have stumbled upon it "just by accident."

Of course, we do not believe that anything really happens by accident. The God of the universe is ultimately in control of all things. But there are times when things come unexpectedly.

The first parable reflects a man who was not actively looking for the Kingdom of God, but came face to face with it through unforeseen circumstances. He is the man who heard the message of the gospel at a time when he was not looking for God. But he heard that message and he believed it and came to see its value for his life.

*I permitted Myself to be sought by those who did not ask for Me; I permitted Myself to be found by those who did not seek Me. I said, "Here am I, here am I," to a nation which did not call on My name. (Isaiah 65:1).*

In the days of Jesus, this man characterized the world of the Gentiles. They did not know God and were not seeking after God, but within a few short years the message of the cross would be spread to every nation.

The Samaritan woman was like that. She did not come looking for Jesus. She merely came to a well to fetch water. She returned with the Water of Life.

The Philippian jailer was also like that. He went to work the graveyard shift one night, guarding two prisoners named Paul and Silas. Before the night was over, he had become a citizen of the Kingdom.

If the parable of the hidden treasure is a picture of the Gentile who knew nothing about the Kingdom until he had found it, then perhaps the parable of the pearl is a picture of the Jew who spent his life looking for the Kingdom.

It was to him that the oracles of God had been given. He had grown up with the promises of God and the Word of God. To him was given the promise that, if he would seek out the Lord, he would find Him.

*"And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart; <sup>14</sup> and I will be found by you," declares the Lord. "and I will restore your fortunes and will gather you from all the nations and from all the places where I have driven you," declares the Lord, "and I will bring you back to the place from where I sent you into exile." (Jeremiah 29:13-14).*

This passage promises us that when a man seeks for God, that man will find Him. The problem is NOT that God is so hard to find. The problem is that men are not really seeking. Indeed, Paul tells us that there is NONE who seeks after God (Romans 3). The only reason that a man seeks after God at all is because the Lord has first done a work inside that man.

3. Once Found, The Kingdom must be Appropriated.

It is not enough to hear the message of the Gospel and to say, "Yes, that is a very nice story about God's love and about His gift of Jesus who died on our behalf. I believe that the story is true."

It is not enough to believe certain FACTS about the Gospel. You must APPROPRIATE the Gospel for yourself. You must accept Jesus as YOUR OWN Lord and YOUR OWN Savior. You must repent of your sins and recognize your past rebellion against God and you must change sides in the spiritual war.

I fear that there are too many people who pray a prayer to Christ, thinking that by doing so He is changing sides and that now He will be on their side.

The truth is that we were once members of the Kingdom of Darkness and a day came when WE changed sides and entered into the Kingdom of Light.

4. The Kingdom Demands a Complete Commitment.

This is the point of the parable. The means and manner in which each man was introduced to the Kingdom was different, but what was the same was that, once they had seen it, each man resolved that nothing would stand in his way of obtaining it. No cost was too great.

A wealthy young nobleman came to Jesus one day and asked Him, "What good thing must I do in order to inherit eternal life?"

How would you like to have that kind of reaction when you went on an Evangelistic visit? You would think that there would be no way that a man like this could get away from Jesus without receiving eternal life.

Jesus first challenged him on his opinion of goodness and then turned his attention to the commandments of the Scriptures. When the young man insisted that he had been diligent in his keeping of the commandments, Jesus instructed him to give up all of his possessions and come and be a disciple. At this, the man turned away in sorrow.

What happened? The man was rich. That in itself was not wrong. What was wrong was that he was so tied to his riches that they kept him from following Jesus. His possessions were more important to him than Jesus was. He could not come to Jesus if it meant giving them up.

Let's make this personal. To what are you tied? Is there something to which you are trying to hold? Whatever it is, the Lord will give you no peace until you have chosen between Him and that thing. And if you are experiencing no conflict, then it is because you have already chosen.

Another rich man came to see Jesus one day. His name was Zaccheus. He wasn't just a rich man, he was a tax-collector. He had gotten rich by over-charging people on their taxes.

Zaccheus resolved to be a disciple of Jesus. And he announced to Jesus that his first step on the road to discipleship would be to give half of all his possessions to the poor. He also resolved to return fourfold to all those whom he had cheated. Jesus responded by declaring that salvation had come to the house of Zaccheus.

Real Christianity will always COST. It cost God the life of His Son and it will cost you your life as well. That is not to say that you must pay God something in order to save you. There is nothing that you could give to God that would make you deserving of His favor.

Salvation is a free gift. But salvation is also a life-changing gift and to partake of it will change your life.

*"Ho! Every one who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money come, buy and eat. Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost." (Isaiah 55:1).*

There is a transaction made at salvation. It is not a transaction made with money or with good works. It is made when you give up everything that you are to become everything that He is. It is made when you offer up yourself as a living and holy sacrifice.

*He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. <sup>38</sup> And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who has found his life shall lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake shall find it." (Matthew 10:37-39).*

Although salvation is a free gift, Christ will not give it to those whose hands are filled with other things.

What are you holding back? It is that single thing that Christ will continue to ask you for. He will ask until you have nothing. And when you have nothing, then He will give you everything.